



39th BCT tracks down a killer in Taji neighborhood.

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The 256th 'Tiger' Brigade (Enhanced), from La. joins the 1st Cav.

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Troops begin to shift focus of missions in eastern Baghdad.

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Cav Country

Volume 1, Issue 16

"Telling the First Team's Story"

Nov. 27, 2004



By Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

1st Sgt. Larry Hudnall, Spc. Rene Romain (middle), and Sgt. Montgomery Hesler (right), all with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cav. Div., take defensive positions after receiving hostile fire while searching and clearing houses in Fallujah Nov. 10. Their company was one of three companies from 2-7 Cav. who were tasked to break-through insurgent defenses around the city Nov. 8, allowing elements of the 1st Marine Division access to the inside of the city.

2-7 Cav. Breaks Fallujah Barrier

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq-- The Ghost Battalion's mission: pave the way into Fallujah and secure the last insurgent stronghold in Iraq. On the night of Nov. 8, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division, descended in droves and pushed their way into Fallujah securing the city, and spearheading the mission for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

"Our mission was to penetrate the enemy defenses in Fallujah to allow for two Marine [regimental combat teams] to enter the city," said Maj. Scott Jackson, executive officer, 2-7 Cav.

The famous Ghost Battalion cemented its place in the history of the war in Iraq, and has been central to success in Baghdad

See Fallujah, Pages 8 and 9

256th Tiger Brigade Colors Uncased Over Camp Liberty

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT Public Affairs

TIGERLAND, Iraq-- The Soldiers of the 256th Tiger Brigade uncased their colors in a ceremony facilitated by Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr. and Command Sgt. Maj. James Mays, of the Enhanced Separate Brigade.

The ceremony highlighted historical conflicts of the 256th including the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans, the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, WWI, WWII, and Operation Desert Storm. Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, 1st Cavalry Division commander spoke at the ceremony.

"This is the right brigade at the right time for the right mission," he said. "The 256th represents the nation in our ongoing war on global terrorism."

Staff Sgt. Heath Comeaux carried the Brigade Colors during the ceremony and said that carrying the historical flag was one of the greatest honors of his

life.

"Being from Louisiana we hold our lineage very dear to us and the heritage of the brigade is just as much a part of the Army as it is of Louisiana," Comeaux said.

All of the 256th represented the Tiger Brigade: 1-156th, 2-156th, 3-156th and 1-69th Infantry Battalions, 1-141st Field Artillery Battalion, 199th Support Battalion, and 1088th Engineer Battalion.

Basilica concluded the ceremony by expressing that his Soldiers recognize the service of those who have gone before them and vowed that they would honor those sacrifices and the sacrifices of the fallen Soldiers' families by helping to finish the job that they started.

"You have worked hard to ready yourselves and I am extremely proud of you," Basilica said.

Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr. and Command Sgt. Maj. James Mays (far right) of the 256th Tiger Brigade uncased their colors during a ceremony at Camp Al Tahreer (Liberty).



By Sgt. Thomas Benoit, 256th BCT Public Affairs

Pegasus 9 Focus

**First Line Leaders: Be sure your Soldiers are wearing their...
Personal Protective Equipment.**



Combat Survivability: Priceless

Redeployment Stress? Chaplains Offer Help

By Spc. Marie Whitney
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL TAHREER (Liberty), Iraq-- When Special Forces Soldiers returned to the U.S. from their deployment to Afghanistan following the initial phase of Operation Enduring Freedom, there was a surprisingly high level of violent crimes. Statistics on murders, suicides and domestic violence involving the recently deployed Soldiers saw an unpredicted rise at that time.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David Moran, division chaplain for the 1st Cavalry Division, said incidents like that are caused by Soldiers not being "untrained" prior to redeploying from a combat zone.

"Over here, when [the Soldiers] are out on patrols, and someone pushes, they push back. It's part of being assertive," Moran said. "But when they go back to the states, and someone like a family member pushes, then [they] still push back."

Because of this, redeploying Soldiers must undergo training similar to the training they received prior to and upon arrival in theater, Moran said. He said Soldiers had to train up and get accustomed to the environment, rules and the mindset used in a combat zone, and after a year of living with all of that, they will have to do the opposite.

He said Soldiers need to "un-train" themselves in order to fit in back home.

The chaplain said making the transition from a combat zone to home isn't easy for everyone. That is why the chaplain's brief, along with Soldiers keeping an eye on their buddies, is an important part of the redeployment process.

Severe issues, like murder and suicides, may happen in just a small amount of redeploying Soldiers, Moran said. More commonly, some Soldiers can experience milder problems, like disagreements with family and friends or problems sleeping.

Moran said that Soldiers in a combat zone are trained to think and react in specific manners to keep themselves alive. But that same state of mind doesn't apply stateside, and can often cause issues with family, friends and colleagues.

This is where the chaplain's briefing, which will take place 30 days prior to redeployment, comes in. The briefings will be given at a brigade level, and are similar to the ones Soldiers are given prior to going on environmental morale leave. A few extra sections are added, like stress management and dealing with changes.

There will also be classes for families when Soldiers arrive home.

The chaplain's briefing, "is all about the Army caring about Soldiers and wanting to prevent that kind of violence," Moran said. "[Its] about trying to find ways to help Soldiers go back to America safely with those that they're living with, and the community."

Spur to The Moment

Photos by Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

"I'm looking forward to growing as a leader, getting the information to my Soldiers as soon as possible to assist them on their missions."



2LT Candice Biery,
Headquarters Company
199th Support Bat.

"What are your expectations for the next year?"

"I volunteered to be here to do my duty and hopefully to make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people."



SFC Class Tony Wyatt,
Headquarters Company
1088th Engineer Bat.

"I expect a lot of cohesion within the units and separate companies. We all need to be there for each other."



SGT Neeka Dorn
Headquarters Company
256th BCT

"I would like to learn about a culture that is foreign to me and experience a different way of life."



SPC Chris Hulin
Headquarters Company
2-156 Infantry

"I want to save some money. I have a son starting private school."



SPC Douglas Franklin,
Headquarters Company
1-141 Field Artillery

Commanding General:
Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli
Public Affairs Officer:
Lt. Col. James Hutton
122 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Commander:
Maj. John Fuhrman
Public Affairs Supervisor:
Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Sgt. 122 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment:
1st Sgt. William Kuhns
Editor: Sgt. 1st Class Tony Sailer
Layout: Spc. Andy Miller
Staff Writers: Staff Sgt. Rebekah-Mae Bruns, Staff Sgt. Susan German, Staff Sgt. Terion LaSonde, Sgt. Dan Purcell, Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, Cpl. Bill Putnam, Spc. Jan Critchfield, Spc. Al Barrus, Spc. Erik LeDrew, Spc. Marie Whitney
Special to: Spc. Erin Robicheaux, Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, Pfc. Brian Schroeder

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Mortar Team Sets High Score in Fallujah

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq-- U.S. Forces took control of the former insurgent stronghold of Fallujah after less than a week of fighting during Operation Phantom Fury. Part of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment's victory came with the help of a ready and reliable mortar platoon.

Standing by 24 hours a day during seven days of battle, the 2-7 Cav. Headquarters Company mortarmen received dozens of missions daily. Even from six kilometers away the mortarmen played a vital role in the operation and helped pacify the hostile city.

"Being a mortar man, it's good knowing that we fire these rounds and take out a lot of the [insurgents]," Spc. Daniel Ethridge, a mortarmen in Headquarters Company said. "It's not too much effort on our part, and we can take out 40 guys with one round."

The platoon broke a personal record in one week of missions by firing an enormous number of 120 mm high-explosive rounds.

"We are pushing over 600 rounds in this week," said Capt. Nick Gratkowski, the mortar platoon leader. "That's a record for us. The most rounds we will fire back at Fort Hood is about 250 in one year, so we have shot off a couple of years worth here."

Receiving so many fire missions, and firing so many rounds places a significant workload on these troops, especially when missions come



Photos by Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD
Spc. William Armstrong, a mortarmen in Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, drops a 120 mm round down his mortar. He and the rest of his platoon fired more than 600 rounds at positions in Fallujah from their base just outside the city during Operation Phantom Fury.

showers. Out here that's what baby wipes and bottled water are for. As for food, mornings and lunch we eat [Meals Ready to Eat], but at nights they bring in hot chow and that really helps. It's something to look forward to."

The mortar team has spent the majority of their deployment at Taji, north of Baghdad. There they have pretty nice living conditions. Even compared to their time in Najaf, their setup outside of Fallujah is the grittiest, they said.

"At Najaf we had an actual place to fire from which was pretty secure" Ethridge said. "We were next to an [Iraqi Police] station, and we could go inside and relax, here we are just in the



Spc. Daniel Ethridge, a mortarmen in 2-7 Cav., cleans his section's mortar tube between fire missions. middle of a desert."

Even with their current conditions, the platoon leader says his men get the job done without argument.

"We have nothing fancy here," Gratkowski said. "Hey, we get hot chow at night. My guys aren't complaining. They are the craziest guys in the battalion, but also the hardest working. Whatever mission I give them, they will do it to their best. My men are why I love my job."

Holiday Season Mail Deadlines Announced

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL TAHREER (Liberty), Iraq-- Whether it's incoming mail destined for a Soldier serving with Task Force Baghdad, or a package heading home to the states, the mailing deadline to get it there before Christmas is the same, according to the officer overseeing all postal operations for the 1st Cavalry Division in the Iraqi capital.

"We're seeing delivery times for letters [back to the states] to be nine to 11 days," said Lt. Col. Colin Hood, the commander of the 15th Personnel Services Battalion, which operates every military post office within Baghdad. "It's usually 12 to 15 days for packages."

But, that turnaround time is when it's business as usual at the post offices here. Hood said his military post offices at 1st Cavalry Division forward operating bases in and around the Iraqi capital are expecting the volume of mail coming in to nearly double as the holiday season approaches.

"Right now, we're handling between 385,000 to 650,000 pounds of mail each week," Hood said. It's like making a PCS [permanent change of station] move every week!"

In order to address the anticipated swell in mail for the holiday season, Hood said brigades and battalions will assist his postal workers, with

each unit providing a couple of Soldiers to help speed the process. He also said his post offices will be extending its hours.

Hood warned, though, that Soldiers need to know what they can send in the mail, and their friends and families need to know what can be sent ... and what can't.

"There are several Soldiers right now facing charges under the UCMJ [Uniformed Code of Military Justice] for receiving multiple shipments of alcohol," Hood said. "Even candy filled with alcohol is prohibited and can get a Soldier into trouble."

Hood said every package is x-rayed in Bahrain before leaving the theater, and they've uncovered some surprising items.

We've seen Soldiers and civilians try to mail back machine guns, assault rifles and pistols," Hood said. "There was one civilian caught trying to send back two AK-47s [Russian-made assault rifles] in a false bottom of a container. He was arrested."

Besides knowing what is prohibited, Hood said he advises his Soldiers to tell their families to send consumable goods this holiday season.

"There's space limitations on what we can ship back [with units]," Hood noted. "Unless a Soldier wants to pay to mail an item back to the states themselves, I recommend to them that they tell their families to send consumable goods."

Holiday Mailing Dates

(from the U.S. to Iraq and from Iraq to the U.S.)

-Military Parcel Post (MPS):

-Priority Packages & Letters:

Dec. 4

Dec. 6

Not everything is available...

-pornographic material

-military issue equipment

-candy or cake with alcohol

-pork products

-cigars

-dry ice

-alcohol

-flammables

By Spc. Marie Whitney, 122nd MPAD

Troops Shift Focus in eastern Baghdad

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- Since fighting between militiamen loyal to cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and multinational forces subsided, Soldiers with Task Force Baghdad have taken the opportunity to shift their efforts from combat operations to reconstruction in the Al-Thawra District, commonly referred to as Sadr City.

On November 7, infrastructure projects estimated at \$161 million resumed after a long hiatus.

Sadr City, a sprawling area that is

home to more than two million people in northern Al-Thawra, has been a focus of militia recruitment that takes advantage of a high jobless rate. As a result, the region had been the scene of fighting between militiamen and multinational forces.

"The militia appear to be cooperating," said Lt. Col. Lawrence Holmes, commander of the 20th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Holmes' unit works with the Iraqi government on infrastructure projects in the area. "[This] will enable us to use the essential services as a tool to stop the fighting."

Essential services have been defined by the 1st Cavalry Division as electrical networks, sewage pipelines and pump stations, running water, and trash disposal. Projects such as the renovation of fire and police stations have also drawn from the millions of dollars dedicated to essential services in the region.

"Once the people see ... all the construction that's going on out there, we're going to build so much momentum that the militia will not be able to get a foothold," Holmes said. "We're going to put 15,000 people to work on an area that had been neglected for over 35 years under [dictator Saddam Hussein's] regime."

Before early August of this year, when fighting flared up in Sadr City, infrastructure projects all over the district were underway. When militiamen made threats against Sadr City-based contractors working on projects in northern neighborhoods,



Photos by Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Although a bulldozer could clear this Sadr City road of debris in a fraction of the time, dozens of workers are hired in the interest of helping more local citizens with a paycheck. Thousands of Sadr City residents lost their jobs during months of fighting there between Multi-National Forces and militia.

the 1st BCT made the decision to shift all efforts to the more stable southern end of the neighborhood in the interest of safety.

As a result, thousands of residents of Sadr City lost their jobs.

"Fifteen thousand people we were employing in Sadr City lost their jobs because of the militia," Holmes said. "When [the people of Sadr City] saw the militia start fighting, they saw the benefits of the projects go away. [The militiamen] are not interested in seeing the Iraqi people make progress, they're only interested in causing trouble."

Local Iraqis noticed the correlation as well, Holmes said.

"People started asking about it, and we think [their opinion] had a direct influence on the effort of having the militia turn in their weapons and start the disbanding process," Holmes said.

Within three weeks of the resumption of projects in northern Sadr City, reconstruction projects organized by the 20th Engineers will create an estimated sixteen thousand jobs, and put much needed money into the local economy when completed.



One of thousands of men employed by multinational forces in Baghdad's Sadr City mixes concrete for a U.S. sponsored project in Sadr City.

First Team Soldiers Donate Sheep to Iraqis for Ramadan

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- As a token of thanks to the people of Sadr City, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team donated 30 sheep to a needy community in celebration of the holy month of Ramadan on Oct. 28.

"This is a gift from [Multi-National Forces] to the citizens to recognize Ramadan and at the same time [recognize] cooperation between [Multi-National Forces], the Iraqi government, and the [Iraqi people]," Maj. Bill Wyman of the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion said.

Wyman worked with a local religious leader who helped the brigade find people who were in need during the holiday season.

The sheep were purchased locally, and then delivered to the families in the bed of a semi-truck trailer driven by Soldiers based at

Forward Operating Base Hope.

"We were able to get 30 sheep for them, and once we've distributed them out, the Sheik, or holy representative, is going to ... have the sheep butchered and then distribute [the meat] amongst the families evenly so that their needs are met."

The event is another effort of 1BCT to improve relations with local Iraqi citizens and also to recognize that the brigade has experienced a period of relative peace during this year's Ramadan. This peace has enabled the brigade to switch its emphasis from combat operations to civil military operations and proceed with plans for millions of dollars in infrastructure projects for eastern Baghdad neighborhoods.

"There are plans to continue humanitarian aid to the citizens of Sadr City," Wyman said. "We want to continue with this effort right now, with the sheep [donations]."

Previous donations of sheep and frozen chickens have been huge hits with local residents.

"[Other units] have had success where they handed out 475 chickens in less than 15 minutes," he said. "And that, again, was met with overwhelming joy on the behalf of the people who received them."

"As Muslims, we should be giving you all gifts," said the Sheik who represented the people who received the sheep. "But we have nothing."

"The gifts are your smiles," Wyman said. "[Multinational forces] are here to be a friend and protector of the people of Sadr City."

A 1st Brigade Combat Team Soldier takes a crash course in 'Sheep Herding 101' on Oct. 28, during a donation of 30 sheep to a neighborhood in Baghdad. The sheep were donated to local needy families for consumption during the holy month of Ramadan.



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Black Jack

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Gator Bat. Pulls Out Big Guns in Fallujah

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq-- While the troopers of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment and the Marines of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Division were on the ground in Fallujah, it was the Soldiers of Company A, "Gator" Battery, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who supported them with artillery fire.

"Our mission is to provide artillery support for the units in Fallujah," said Sgt. Andre Hall, a fire section chief with Gator Battery and a Hopkinsville, Ky. native.

Their fire-missions in Fallujah varied, but the battery was equipped to handle whatever came their way.

"We use Paladin Howitzers which are capable of firing [high-explosive], illumination and smoke rounds," said Capt. Michael Burgoyne, Battery A commander, 3-82 FA.

Using their Paladins, which are essentially mobile canons, Gator Battery was able to provide whatever artillery support was required. At first, such support mostly consisted of returning fire against insurgents mortaring and attempting to mortar U.S. military



Photos by Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

A Paladin Howitzer with Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, fires a high-explosive round on insurgent forces outside of Fallujah during recent fighting there.

bases around the city of Fallujah.

"We've been providing counter-fire against anti-Iraqi insurgents, which is a strictly responsive mission," Burgoyne, who hails from St. Charles, Mo., said. "But we also have been providing direct-fire support for the

guys [engaged in combat] with the enemy."

According to Hall, when a mission comes down the pipeline, it doesn't always go through because of the possibility of civilian bystanders or friendly forces that are too close to the impact



Soldiers of A "Gator" Battery, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, relax outside their Paladin Howitzer while waiting to receive a fire mission at Camp Fallujah outside the city.

site. "We receive our missions from the Fire Direction Center, lay down the position they give us, and wait for the call to fire," Hall said.

Although Gator Battery's job became considerably busy after the ground battle in Fallujah began, only one in every four missions was actually given the go-ahead for fire during their first few days at Camp Fallujah.

The battery arrived at the Camp the beginning of November with the 2nd BCT, to aid the over-taxed U.S. Marine Corps artillery units who use standard Howitzers, not Paladins—already stationed there.

"The Marine artillery has

been engaging the enemy, but they needed extra support," Burgoyne said. "So that's why our battery came with the [2nd BCT] from Baghdad."

Gator Battery was the only artillery unit from 3-82 FA that accompanied the 2nd BCT to Fallujah, leaving their old sector in southwestern Baghdad behind.

"In Baghdad, we were doing patrols and humanitarian missions," Burgoyne said. "But this mission here is the most important my unit has yet done in the 10 months we've been in Iraq. [Insurgents] cannot be allowed to strike with impunity on a people who are trying to better their own lives, and my Soldiers understand that."

Mechanics On Site to Support the Fallujah Battle

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq-- Many of the combat elements of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, have adopted a nomadic lifestyle in the past weeks. They have moved from Camp Black Jack to Camp Stryker, and now reside at forward locations in and around Fallujah. As they move their combat power from one area to another, their support elements follow.

The 15th Forward Support Battalion provides everything for the 2nd BCT from hot chow and clean water to vehicle parts and ammunition.

The mission in Fallujah hasn't changed much for them, but the working conditions have. Troops conducting maintenance can attest to that.

"The need for parts is a lot higher out here, because you never know what's going to happen," said Spc. Candice Wade, an automated logistics specialist in Company D, 15th FSB. "A truck can be running just great, then with a roadside bomb, mortar attack, or [rocket-propelled grenade] it's down and you're hurting for parts."

She also said that not only is the heightened combat a problem, but being



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. Charles Hreha (left), a track vehicle mechanic in Company A, 15th Forward Support Battalion, assists one of his Soldiers working on an M-88 Track Recovery Vehicle, which is used to recover disabled vehicles.

away from their previous base has created more logistical problems.

Wade, a Texas native, explained that while based at Camp Black Jack, supplies were never an issue. "We'd have everything we need on hand and in stock," she said. "You can only take a certain amount of stuff [to] this area. Parts are always a big issue here."

Even while parts are in short supply for the 15th FSB, their logistics hub just out-

side the city serves as a medium for every unit operating in the city.

"My troops receive reports from forward and coordinate for deadline items and request parts designations from the rear" said 1st Lt. Jay Johnson, maintenance control officer for Company A, 15th FSB. "We get them from where ever else we can get them, then we send them forward to the combat units."

Other missions the "Gamblers" take on

involve going into sector to recover vehicles disabled by combat.

"We go out with escorts to recover stuff and we have to deal with [improvised explosive devices], RPGs and mortar rounds too," said Sgt. Charles Hreha, a track vehicle mechanic in Company A, 15th FSB. "We go out and get broken-down tanks, Bradleys and Stryker Vehicles. I had to do quite a few recovery missions so far."

It's a new experience for most of the Gamblers, and with altered mission conditions comes new living conditions.

"The living conditions here are a lot different. We live in tents full of people with gravel floors," Wade said. "We usually can get showers every night at the shower tent so it's not too bad. We just take it day by day."

As the luxuries of daily life decreased and the challenges increased for much of 15th FSB, Wade said the troops, having served 11 months so far, know they will be home soon.

"In our time here, we've had to adapt to a lot of things," Wade said. "Being here will just make going home all the sweeter after this. [When] you come here, you actually see how many little things you've taken for granted."

Soldiers Face Mortars on 'Quiet' Mission

By Sgt. Christina Rockhill
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AI-ISTIQLAL (Independence), Iraq-- The troops crammed into the back of the Bradley fighting vehicle, shoulder to shoulder. As the hatch closed, shutting out the light of mid-day, their faces held a mixture of anticipation and nervousness. The Bradley started moving and Spc. Matt Nichols made the sign of the cross.

"Do you always do that," Staff Sgt. Justin Mallery yelled over the loud noise of the Bradley.

"Always. Always," Nicholson mouthed.

The troops were heading to a relative-

ly quiet area of Haifa Street, where they would be on a reconnaissance mission, scoping out the neighborhood for any insurgent activity.

"We're just observing today," Mallery said. "We hope if they see us out here, it will disrupt whatever they're doing in sector."

The Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, are more than used to a little action. They routinely patrol the volatile Haifa Street. Mallery said nearly every one of his Soldiers has received a Purple Heart.

The Bradley pulled up to a building. This particular building had been the target of many attacks and was vacant except for a few Iraqi workers, who were repairing damage from the last attack. The Bradley's hatch opened, and the Soldiers ran inside the building, looking from room to room, climbing floor after floor before finally settling on the roof as a suitable vantage point.

"Keep your heads on swivel," Mallery said. "They're shooting from all over today."

The Soldiers set up hasty-firing positions using old metal bookshelves that had seen better days. Small-arms fire echoed in the distance.

"This is one of the quieter areas of Haifa Street," Mallery said. "It's normal for us to only take one or two grenades on a mission out here. It's a shock if it doesn't happen."

The long drawn out whistle of a mortar is heard nearby. The Soldiers freeze in



Photos by Sgt. Christina Rockhill, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Sgt. Brian Haiku, Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, scans his sector during a reconnaissance mission on Haifa Street in Baghdad. Haiku and his fellow Soldiers were attacked with a mortar on the rooftop, but miraculously no one was injured.

place.

"Get down. Get down," Mallery shouted.

The Soldiers crouched close to the walls of the roof and tucked their chins to their chests.

"Boom!"

The mortar impacted the center of the roof about 15 feet from the troops.

"Stay down," Mallery yelled.

The Soldiers stayed crouched, expecting another mortar round to follow.

After it was apparent that a second mortar was not going to impact, the Soldiers scrambled to their feet and rushed toward the stairwell, hugging the walls and staying low.

"They had eyes on us," Mallery said. "They knew we were here. They even had time to aim."

The Soldiers rushed down the stairs and rested against a safe piece of wall. Small-arms fire erupted closer this time. The Soldiers joined the rest of their group to provide security through out the building. Miraculously, no one was injured in the attack.

Pfc. William Jones who has only been in Iraq for two weeks was standing right where the mortar hit only moments before the impact.

"I wouldn't still be here if you didn't tell me to move," he said to Mallery. "At least it was only one."



Staff Sgt. Justin Mallery, Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, calls on the radio for extra security after a 60 mm mortar impacted the roof where the Soldiers were standing moments before.

302nd ING Bat. Spoils "Aggressor's" Attack

By Staff Sgt. Susan German
122nd MPAD

CAMP AI-ISTIQLAL (Independence), Iraq-- Intelligence reports indicated that the threat of a big attack loomed over a Baghdad neighborhood and defending troops had limited time to locate the mastermind targeting 4,000 innocent Iraqis.

Decision makers sat huddled around the table in the tactical operations center at battalion headquarters, surrounded by maps and charts, mulling over possible courses of action and planning their coordinated response.

Leaders of the 302nd Iraqi National Guard (ING) Battalion participated in their first command post exercise (CPX) at Camp Independence Oct. 25-28.

Capt. Kevin Bradley, an adviser to the 302nd and plans officer from the operations section of the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, along with cadre comprised of person-



By Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd MPAD

Capt. Kevin Bradley (left), an adviser to the 302nd Iraqi National Guard Battalion and Capt. Stefan Ruppel-Lee (right), a plans officer and observer/controller with the operations section of the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, explain details to an ING battalion staff officer during the 302nd's first command post exercise Oct. 25-28.

nel from throughout the brigade, has worked closely with the ING Soldiers and staff for the past seven months to bring them to their current level of proficiency.

Advisers from the 3rd BCT came up with the scenario, throwing anything and everything at the

ING, in order to test their capabilities.

"They tried to make it the worst three days they could possibly have in sector - all the worst scenarios [such as vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), crowd demonstrations

and media presence], that could possibly happen to you in 24 hours, happened at the same time," Bradley said.

The 302nd has been involved in numerous missions already and shown the advisers they're able to plan, coordinate and track tasks, Bradley said. One of the bigger aims of the exercise was to get the ING staff involved in managing their personnel during extended missions.

"It was more to give them a taste of what it was going to be like - for three days, 24-hours-a-day - how they were going to keep everybody here, how they were going to continue a presence when guys want to go home, when the staff wants to go home and see their family," Bradley said.

"They're doing our missions, but they don't have the strength that we do, in that everyone's here, everyone's available, if you need them. You just go wake them up and they go on patrols," he said. "They've

got guys who are at home, who are going to be off, how do they give them time off, things like that. That's what we were trying to get them to take a look at."

The other goal was to get a different set of eyes on the situation. Since he's been working closely with the 302nd for seven months, Bradley knows them and their quirks well. He wanted to get some of the majors on the brigade staff, as well as some of the captains out to see what they're capable of and to give them some different ideas for training, things they might have overlooked or gave up on, Bradley said.

They pretty much had to start from scratch, building from ground zero, said Greenacres, Fla. native Staff Sgt. Albert Amoroso, an adviser for the 302nd from 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3BCT.

"A lot of these guys really want to learn from us and they want to do great things for their country," Amoroso said.

Warriors

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615 ASB at Home on Butler Range

By Sgt. Dan Purcell
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- Adjusting for elevation, compensating for an unpredictable breeze, they swag to the left and then to the right: Steady now, they fire, impact observed, adjust, fire again, walking the rounds in. It's a hit.

Soldiers of the 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team led the way to Butler Range in a convoy live fire exercise that brought many noncommissioned officers (NCOs) together for the first time.

"This was the first time for a lot of the NCOs to work together, and given the nature of the training, we basically had to teach ourselves," Sgt. 1st Class Emilio Perales, convoy and range NCO in charge, Bravo Company, 615th ASB noted. "But, we were able to build a very tight and cohesive unit quickly and things just got better and better."

"The purpose of the exercise was twofold," Capt. Joseph Caldwell, convoy and range officer-in-charge, Headquarters Support Company, 615th ASB, explained. "First, we wanted to provide our Soldiers real-world air and ground convoy procedures, and secondly, to provide crew-served weapons marksmanship training."

Putting it all together required the help



Sgt. 1st Class Tim Sollenberger, range instructor, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, instructs Soldiers on sight alignment and elevation of the M-203 (rifle mounted 40-millimeter grenade launcher) on the way out to the firing line at Butler Range.

of experienced NCOs from throughout the brigade, who were tasked with instructing Soldiers in crew-served weapons marksmanship for six days of live fire training.

During the training phase, the NCOs provided battle-focused instruction on a



Photos by Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. 1st Class Roman Bednar, range instructor, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, instructs Spc. Alexander Ramos, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, how to safely lock and load a 50-caliber crew-served machine gun during weapons training at Butler Range.

variety of crew served weapons to include the 50-caliber machine gun, M-240B machine gun, squad assault weapon (SAW), MK 19-3 (automatic 40-millimeter grenade launcher) and even the M-203 (rifle mounted) grenade launcher. Soldiers were taught how to operate the weaponry safely and effectively.

"The Soldiers are not here to qualify, they are here to familiarize themselves with the different systems so they can fill in when needed," said Perales.

Typical in Army life, the training was an all-day affair beginning with Soldiers

drawing weapons at zero-dark-thirty, mounting them on vehicles, grabbing a quick breakfast and heading out.

"This is not a check-the-box range. Each Soldier receives step-by-step instruction," Caldwell said.

Once on Butler Range, the Soldiers received a safety briefing, drew ammunition and spent the remainder of the morning getting familiarized with various weapon systems under the guidance of their instructors. The afternoon was spent firing at rusted tanks and at targets within a mock village from a moving convoy.



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Spc. Melanie Christmas (above), Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion of the 25th Aviation Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, verifies her rifles is set on the proper elevation. Christmas was serving her four-hour shift manning perimeter towers responsible for base security. Spc. Tyler Iverson from Atlanta, Ga., and Spc. Jay Allen (far right), from Minot, N.D., both with the 13th Signal Battalion, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., peer out from their lofty guard tower during a four-hour shift. In addition to their primary job, Soldiers of the 4th BCT spend a week at a time manning the towers providing base security for Camp Taji north of Iraq.



On the Tower: Taji's First Line of Defense

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- For a week at a time they leave their normal jobs and assume their turn. Each battalion must cough-up its fair share, contributing to base defense. They trudge up the long flight of stairs to the lofty platform, manning the towers, providing over-watch security.

Soldiers of the First Team's Warriors Brigade, 4th Brigade Combat Team, are doing their part for base and airfield defense, manning the towers in and around Camp Taji.

"We've got a handful of towers that [4th BCT] are responsible for," said Sierra Vista, Ariz native 1st Sgt. Michael Clowser, Headquarters Company first sergeant. "We man several of the perimeter towers providing base security and then we are responsible for the towers that guard the airfield."

His vehicle lumbering through the mud, Clowser visited some of his Soldiers who were on guard duty. He pulled his vehicle over and walked around the area.

"Show me your lane of fire," Clowser said to Spc. Kevin Backlund, a native of Duluth, Minn., currently assigned to Company A, 615th Aviation Support

Battalion.

Moving his arm in a semi-circular direction, Backlund indicated the area he is responsible for in the event shots are fired at the tower.

"An insurgent could fire from anywhere out there and we are the first line of defense for this base," Backlund said.

Describing himself as something of an action junky, Backlund said he enjoys the change of pace standing guard duty affords him.

"It's good to get out here and do something different from my normal job," he said. "It really makes you feel like you are doing something and being a part of it all."

Soldiers speak in hushed tones of the engagements they've seen working the towers, of the rocket propelled grenade that sailed over one tower and the times they've returned fire. The tales may get a little bigger with each retelling but they serve to remind the Troopers of the seriousness of their job.

"It can be hard just standing up here for many hours at a time, so you find ways to pass the time, tell jokes, talk about the Army, things like that, but in the back of your head you're always reminding yourself to stay alert, to keep watching," said Spc. Jeremy Gravedoni, Headquarters Support Company, 615th ASB.



The Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicles and M113 armored personnel carriers of the 2nd "Ghost" Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cav. Div., prepare to roll out of Assembly Area Otter, just outside Fallujah, to begin the assault on the city the evening of Nov. 8.

Follow Me: Ghost Battalion Spearheads Fallujah Assault

Fallujah, From page 1

and Najaf prior to becoming the main effort in Fallujah. Based on its prior track record, it is apparent the Ghost Battalion was the Marine's battalion of choice.

"The 1st Marine Division specifically asked for us because of our reputation," said 1st Sgt. Larry Hudnall, first sergeant for Company C, 2-7 Cav. "And Marines never specifically ask for a unit's help."

As the Air Force was busy bombarding the city and weakening the insurgent defenses, 2-7 Cav. started staging their Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicles, Abrams tanks and armored personnel carriers ready to take the fight to the streets.

The Ghost Battalion began their assault on Fallujah just after 7 p.m.

Under the cover of darkness, three companies from 2-7 Cav. breached insurgent defenses by plowing through a railway station on the outskirts of Fallujah's Joulwan district.

The Soldiers secured the railway station and pushed into the city, continuing their fight while artillery, mortars and air assets continued pounding other parts of the city.

According to Jackson, after the Ghost troopers completed their initial mission by successfully securing a major thoroughfare into Fallujah, the 2-7 Cav. Soldiers continued to push further into the city, conducting operations to destroy the insurgents.

"We've been doing screening missions along [a main thoroughfare], patrolling it in order to allow the battalion access to its objectives in the city," Hudnall, a Killeen, Texas, native, said. "We've also been doing mounted combat patrols in our sector, or what we call 'gun runs,' which allow us to get assessments of enemy positions in our sector."

In addition to the damage that was done by the battalion's Bradleys and tanks, the 2-7 infantry troops had to dismount to search and clear buildings and houses, as well as to engage the enemy on foot.

"Our guys are doing a great job in the fight," Jackson said. "They've certainly handed-out more than they were given."

By Nov. 12, insurgents were surrendering in droves, 1st Sgt. Larry Hudnall (right), Company C first sergeant, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, stands atop a building in Fallujah Nov. 11, while scouting a nearby street and the surrounding buildings for enemy activity.

waving improvised white flags. Elements of the new Iraqi military were escorted into the city to clear all of the houses and buildings and were also tasked to apprehend the countless insurgent detainees.

"It's a good thing that we're getting all of these [insurgents] out of here," said Spc. Michael Haggerty, Comanche Co., 2-7 Cav., and a Cape May, N.J. native. "This is the last insurgent stronghold in Iraq, so the country will be much better off after this city is secured."

By the end of the first week of the fight, the majority of the city had been overtaken by either 2-7 Cav. or the Marine regiments that entered Fallujah in the Ghost Battalion's wake.

Hudnall said it is still too early to determine if the overall operation was a complete success.

"This is the last great battle in Iraq," Hudnall said. "I really think our level of success here in Fallujah will be determined in the future, when they hold their own elections."



The Soldiers (above), of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cav. Div. bound down an empty street in Fallujah, searching and clearing every house along the road for several blocks Nov. 10, while a Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicle provides security. Sgt. Reinier Perez (foreground), listens to commands from his platoon leader over the radio while allowing his squad to take a moment to rest. When 2-7 Cav.'s infantry dismounts weren't searching, they spent the majority of their time riding in the troop transport area of their Bradleys to provide instant, boots-on-the-ground support in the event the tracked vehicles encountered enemies they couldn't engage or became disabled.





Photos by Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

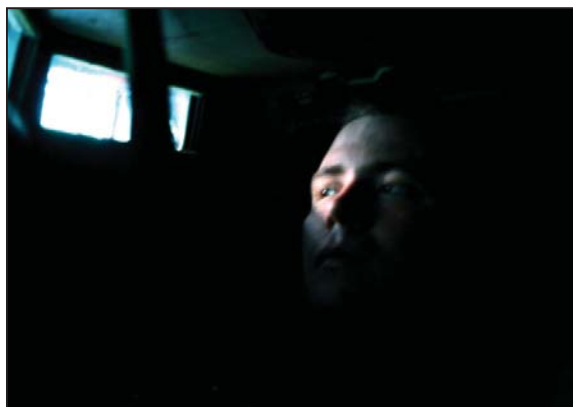


Spc. Rene Romain (above), Comanche Co., 2-7 Cav., carries an old machine gun captured in a raid on an insurgent's house in Fallujah, Nov. 11. Soldiers found several rocket-propelled grenades, a Dragunov sniper rifle, a bag of grenades and a suitcase filled with passports and other items during the raid.



An Army Engineer bulldozer (above), demolishes a building used by insurgents in Fallujah Nov. 11, while a nearby Bradley provides security.

Spc. Michael Haggerty (right), Comanche Co., 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cav. Div., peers out of the rear periscopes in the troop-carrying area of a Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicle Nov. 11, while his squad prepares to go on a "gun run," a mission in which their primary task was to assess and attack enemy positions and fortifications in their sector.



Spc. David Bednar (above), a communications specialist for Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cav. Div., monitors the radio for the company commander while standing at the rear of an armored personnel carrier in Fallujah during an assault on the city Nov. 10.

Red Team

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Seven Suspects Snagged in Sunrise Search

By Cpl. Bill Putnam
122nd MPAD

AL RASHID, Iraq-- Troopers netted seven suspected terrorists in an early morning raid Nov. 7th.

Cavalry Troopers from 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, detained seven men suspected of ties to insurgency and terror cells.

One of the men has alleged ties to the Aug. 30 attack on a sewage pumping station. The attack by multiple vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, killed over 40 locals, 35 of whom were children, and wounded over 100 others.

The target for 1-7 Cavalry's Comanche Troop was a man suspected of firing rocket-propelled grenades at U.S. and Iraqi National Guard units.

The joint search team of Trooper and ING soldiers entered the house covered by several M-3 Cavalry Fighting Vehicles parked at nearby locations.

As the search team went in the home they pulled the men out while keeping the women inside. An AK-47 assault rifle with one magazine was found, and the click-clack of its bolt could be heard as a Soldier cleared it.

Several unusual items were also pulled out of the house. Several bags of powdered graphite were found in a back storage room.

"The graphite can be used as a lubricant



Photos by Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers from Comanche Troop, 1-7 Cavalry, prepare to enter an Al Rashid home during the early-morning Nov. 7 raid. Seven suspected insurgents were detained during the early morning operation in Al Rashid.

for things," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ray Chandler, 1-7 Cavalry sergeant major. "Though, I'm not sure why he'd have it."

The search also yielded something familiar for at least one trooper: orange paint.

To Sgt. 1st Class Mike Molina, a cavalry section leader in Comanche Troop, the

paint looked very familiar. About two weeks before this raid, his Bradley fighting vehicle was hit by an IED. When the 120-millimeter mortar lying on the roadside blew up under his track it sprayed a bright orange paint all over the road and vehicle's side.

"It looks like the stuff bank tellers put in the money bags when they're being robbed,"

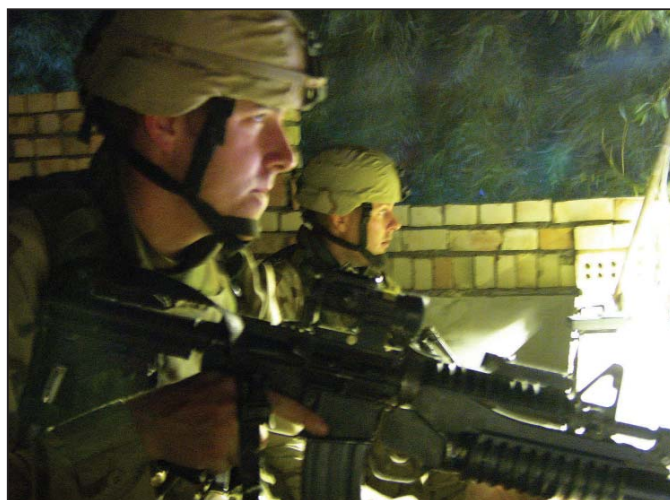


Capt. Scott Schuster, the intelligence officer for 1-7 Cavalry, questions a suspected insurgent during an early-morning Nov. 7 raid in the Al Rashid District of Baghdad.

he said. The paint the unit found in the raid was the same color and texture of that in the IED.

The troopers lined the detained men up against a wall before Capt. Scott Schuster, the squadron's intelligence officer, questioned them.

Eventually, the Soldiers tested the men for exposure to explosives. Two came up positive, but all were detained.



Photos by Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

Cpl. William McDaniel (above), a military police in 545th Military Police Company, talks to another MP at an Iraqi Police station in Baghdad's Al Rashid District. The Soldiers said the first seven months of their tour were relatively quiet, but around Nov. 1 they started seeing more attacks aimed at their patrols. Spc. Christopher Larsen (right), a military police in 545th Military Police Company, pulls guard duty at an Iraqi Police station in Baghdad's Al Rashid District Nov. 11. The MPs pull duty at Iraqi police stations in order to advise the Iraqi police who they've trained during their tour.



545th MPs Teach, Mentor Iraqi Police Counterparts

By Cpl. Bill Putnam
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- Like many cities trying to curb violence in our own country, Iraq has instituted a curfew.

Every day different elements of the 545th MPs, head out to IP stations throughout Baghdad's Al Rashid District. It's a fun and interesting job for many of them but it's not without hazards.

Advising the IPs is the biggest reason for being out at the stations, some of the MPs in 1st platoon of the 545th Military Police Company, squad said.

"It's good that we're out here," said Spc. Hector Cerna, 545th MP. "[The IPs] like that we're working with them, training with them and giving them classes when we can."

Because both he and the IPs are policemen, Cerna said he really likes going out and working with them.

"Me as an MP and them as IPs, we pretty much have the same job," he said.

Cerna said the IPs aren't afraid. They'll fight back when they're attacked. And, more importantly, they want to get out and take the streets back from the insurgents and terrorists.

"They want their country back and they want their freedom," Cerna said.

Back at Fort Hood, the unit trained for

operations and missions like this one, said Cerna. The company is applying their training here in a real-world situation and there's a lot of satisfaction in that, he noted.

"So it's good to help them and come out here and say 'hey, this is what we know,'" Cerna said. "We teach them and a lot of them put it to use."

The teaching Cerna talked about includes patrolling techniques, field interrogation, and the searching of vehicles and personnel.

"Up until the last couple of weeks, the platoon really hasn't seen too much contact so far," Fuentes said. That changed around Nov. 1 when the insurgents started taking notice of them.

They weren't sure why things became more active for them. Maybe it was Ramadan or perhaps that their luck had just run out. As Cpl. William McDaniel and Fuentes pulled guard duty at an Iraqi Police station in Al Rashid, they contemplated why the platoon's first seven months in Baghdad were as quiet as a church mouse. In the last two weeks, events have taken a 180-degree turn.

They've been hit by improvised explosive devices, and shot at while on patrol or on station.

"We don't normally look for trouble," Fuentes said. "But it definitely looks for us."

Bowie Brigade

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One for Sarah; Tracking Down a Killer

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL TADAMUN (Solidarity), Iraq-- For Soldiers of the Bowie Brigade's Company A, 3rd Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment,

Sahara Latiff, known as Sarah to the guys, was more than just a translator. Her constant, radiant smile brightened everyone's day, making some of the darker moments just a little easier to bear. Sarah was murdered on the morning of Sept. 20. Alpha company

has searched for her killers ever since.

During an early morning raid on Oct. 23 in the village outside Camp Solidarity, Soldiers of Company A detained five individuals believed to be involved with the death of Latiff.

"Sarah was one of the good ones," said Pfc. Jimmy Harris, an infantryman from Camden, Ark. assigned to the company. "Nothing ever seemed to really get her down too much. She would gladly go on any mission we asked her to."

The news of Latiff's murder hit the company hard, everyone was devastated and vowed to bring her killers to justice, but they faced a problem. Tracking down a murderer is difficult. In a hostile land where traveling outside the wire requires gun-truck convoys, freedom of movement is limited.

"We were forced to rely on the intelligence gathering abilities of the locals in our area, and they came through," said acting first sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Floyd Herron of Crossett, Ark. "Friends of Sarah and her family took it upon themselves to seek out who did this and when they thought they had enough information, they brought it to us."

Weeks elapsed between the time of Latiff's killing, to the raid leading to the detention of five men believed to be involved. Planned out in excruciating detail, the operation centered on three houses only a few miles away from Camp Solidarity, a location that has seen a recent surge in improvised explosive device (IED) placement.

Herron said during the investigation, evidence indicated the men they were tracking were not only



Magnolia, Ark. resident, Spc. John Fitzgerald Hill with Company A, 3rd Battalion 153rd Infantry, prepares to enter a house suspected of being the residence of one of the men involved with the killing of Company A translator Sahara Latiff. "We all miss her," he said. "She always greeted everyone like they were her friend."

potentially involved in Latiff's death but were leaders in a cell that was spreading their brand of terror throughout the neighborhood.

"This area has been quiet for a long time," Herron said. "People were friendly [we] never saw too much insurgent activity. But as our investigation continued, the constant fear...in the locals...of these men kept coming up."

Under the cover of darkness the company rolled out and brought their Humvee gun trucks around the location, creating a cordon to prevent any escape. They quickly entered the houses and a full search began. Much to the Soldiers' dismay, the individuals they were looking for were not there. But all was not lost...

A local living in one of the searched houses indicated the individuals were just across the street.

The troops sprinted across the street, lined up against the outer gate and launched into the building. Within minutes, an excited call of "I think we got them!" came across the radio.

The man who gave the information had agreed to positively identify the individuals via digital photographs.

"We got these guys," he said. "We'll start questioning them and figure out exactly their involvement in Sarah's death, maybe even find the trigger puller. The other stuff, the rounds and such seems to confirm our suspicion that these guys, if not leaders, were involved with an insurgent cell operating in the area. So maybe we can bring some justice to Sarah's family and make the neighborhood a little bit safer for its residents."



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 153rd Infantry, 39th Brigade Combat Team, descend a flight of stairs after clearing the upper portion during a raid Oct. 23. Intelligence gathered indicated that the individuals were responsible for the murder of Sahara Latiff, a translator with Company A. The operation would net five detainees who would later be questioned as to their involvement in her death.



By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-Mae Bruns

Sgt. Max Picco, 31, a member of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team, receives congratulation for his heroic actions treating wounded Soldiers during a mortar attack on Camp Taji.

2-7 Medic Disregarded Own Life to Save Others

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-Mae Bruns
39th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- Sgt. Max Picco, 31, of North Manchester, Ind., said after the first mortar, he never heard the rest coming down. He was too busy trying to save the lives of Iraqi Soldiers.

During the mid-morning hours of Oct. 19, a forward operating base, located outside Taji, Iraq, came under attack by insurgents. Mortars rained down inside their five-acre base wounding more than 75 Soldiers.

Between six and eight mortars landed in their area, but Picco said he only heard the first one. As soon as he saw the injured on the ground, he ran out to save the lives of the wounded Iraqi Soldiers despite the barrage of mortars still

falling.

"I saw people down and I knew if I didn't get to them, people would die," said Picco, an eight-year veteran medic.

Picco was the only medic on the base and it would be another hour and a half before others were able to arrive.

At one point, witnesses say they saw Picco working on a chest wound with one hand, and at the same time he had another hand holding on a head dressing for a different patient while talking a combat lifesaver through treatment steps for yet another wounded individual.

"You get so focused that you don't ever really realize all the things going on around you," Picco said. "You just get focused on saving people's lives."

Five Iraqi Soldiers died that day but Picco's actions helped save 75 others.

Commandos

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Soldiers Bring Aid to Small Village

By Pfc. Brian Schroeder
10th Mtn. Div. Public
Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq-- Hunting down insurgents in the Baghdad area is only part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Commandos" mission. They also help cut down on the medical problems in the area as well.

A medical team, composed of Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment and 210th Forward Support Battalion, treated minor medical ailments of residents of a small village outside Baghdad.

"This is an opportunity for us to go out and assess the medical situation of the people of a village in our area of operation, and to provide as much medical care as we can while we are over there," said 1st Lt. Peter Olsen, 4-31 Infantry medical platoon leader.

The medics worked through a translator to identify the medical problems of approximately 13 villagers, and possibly treat any medical problems they may have.

"We will treat chronic problems, such as pain or infections,"

Olsen said. "We give a lot of over the counter drugs and creams. If a patient has an infected wound we treat the wound and give him antibiotic cream to put on it."

Olsen said some of the medical conditions the medical Soldiers see cannot be treated right then because of the severity of the illness.

"We will see some things we cannot treat on the spot, such as malnutrition," he said. "This trip is basically an assessment so when we come out again later, we will be better prepared."

One of the locals said he was grateful for the medical care provided by the Soldiers.

"This is a good idea," the man said. "People need health care. We have a clinic nearby, but a lot of people don't know about it. There are plenty of doctors but not enough medicine."

For some of the Soldiers, this was their first time to provide locals with medical care. Others, like Spc. Darcie Nielson, a 210th FSB medic, helped locals while participating in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. She said her experience with the locals is a humbling



By Pfc. Brian Schroeder, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

Cpt. Kenya Brooks, the 210th Forward Support Battalion surgeon, examines an Iraqi child's ear for a possible infection. A medical team from 210th FSB provided free medical screenings to citizens of a small Iraqi village last month.

one.

"We take a lot for granted, like hot water, food, medical care," Nielson said. "This gives me a chance to meet the Iraqi people. Most of them are really nice; they are not all insurgents and terrorists."

Winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people is a main objective of Soldiers in Iraq, Olsen said. He added that his experience with the locals is one he will never forget.

"The main reason we are going out is so people in this area

know we are here to help them," he said. "Part of the reason I joined the Army was to travel and this is the best possible way to interact with the locals. Personally I think going out and helping these people is awesome."

Seeds Sprout Success for Iraqi Farmers

By Pfc. Brian Schroeder
10th Mtn. Div. Public
Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- In 1400 B.C., Mesopotamians erected a massive Ziggurat, similar to a

pyramid, in the modern day town of Aqar Quf, west of Baghdad. This massive 150-foot structure was built as a temple for the ancient civilization to worship their gods, who they believed, brought growth and prosperity to

the land.

Thousands of years later, the Ziggurat serves as a distribution center for local farmers to pick up donated bags of seed to help make their lands bountiful and prosperous.

Over 184 tons of wheat seed was distributed Oct. 27 to more than 350 local farmers through the Aqar Quf Nahia, which is an area rural neighborhood council similar to county governments in the United States.

Maj. Carrie Acree, a 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion team leader, said that rather than using military boundaries to distribute the seed, multinational forces used Iraqi boundaries for distribution.

"Rather than distribute the seed through the military, we had the Nahia distribute the seed," Acree said. "We want to legitimize the Iraqi government and let the Iraqi people know their government is working for them."

The Aqar Quf Nahia determined the amount of seed distributed to each farmer would be based on the number donoums, or area of land equivalent to 24.7



By Pfc. Brian Schroeder, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

Locals, from the Aqar Quf area, unload a truck full of wheat seed. Over 350 farmers in the area received over 184 tons of wheat seed through the Aqar Quf neighborhood council Oct. 27.

acres, each farmer has. Acree said it was gratifying to see the nahia and local farmers work together.

"The nahia worked together as a team and worked well with the Iraqi farmers," she said. "They were fair in their distribution. It was nice to see the large turn out, which means the nahia called everybody they could, and not just their friends, to come out and receive the seed."

Acree said the Aqar Quf area has not had a multinational force civil affairs team helping to

improve their way of life until now. She said the area is due to receive thousands of dollars in civil affairs projects in the near future.

"Most of area is rural and agriculture driven and we will be trying to get some of those areas potable water," she said. "Most villages do not have potable water, water to their villages or a centralized water treatment facility. We currently have four water treatment facilities in the works for the area."



By Pfc. Brian Schroeder, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

Sgt. Ronald Deruelle, an analyst with Multinational Corps-Iraq, receives his sergeant stripes from his older brother, Warrant Officer William Deruelle, 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Commandos," 10th Mountain Division, attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, in Baghdad Nov. 1. The Bloomingdale, Ohio natives said this is their first time serving in the same location, and ironically, it's in Iraq.

Tiger Brigade

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By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

A long line of 256th Brigade Combat Team vehicles reaches its final destination: Camp Black Jack in Baghdad. The Louisiana-based brigade's final convoys arrived from Kuwait Nov. 4. The unit joins the 1st Cavalry Division, maintaining security in the Iraqi capital. Comprised of units from six different states, the unit conducted over six months of training before deploying to theater.

Louisiana Guardsmen Join First Team

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP BLACK JACK, Iraq-- The Louisiana National Guard's 256th Tiger Brigade arrived in the Iraqi capital Nov. 4 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III. After months of training and preparation the brigade combat team is gearing up for their mission under the leadership of Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr.

"We are proud to become members of the 1st Cavalry Division's First Team," Basilica said. "We are here to make a difference and to help finish the job."

Just like the Cajun delicacy from the unit's home state, the 256th BCT is a

gumbo of additional units. Attached to the Louisiana brigade are units from New York, Minnesota, Washington, Wisconsin, and Illinois. The six states came together in May and trained for six months at Fort Hood, Texas, then deployed for Kuwait in October. Following a few more weeks of training they began the march north to Baghdad.

Spc. Robert Baker of Headquarters Company, 199th Forward Support Battalion, said that the convoy north was stressful.

"Because of what we see on the news and the different stories that we have heard, we all had some fear and anxiety," he said.

But Baker added that the fear and adrenaline was also what kept him and his fellow Soldiers alert and aware of their surroundings at all times.

"It was just like being a football player in a high school championship game," he said. "We went over the plays, or battle drills, in our heads and there was a lot of anticipation just before we rolled out. We made sure that we knew what to do."

Since their arrival, the Soldiers of the 256th have been preparing to assume their mission. Cody Thibodeaux of Company A, 1088th Engineer Battalion, is pleasantly surprised by his living conditions.

"I love this place," he said. "It's tough being away from home, but it's really

pleasant to live here. The rooms are really decent."

Other than missing his family, Thibodeaux hasn't had to sacrifice much of anything.

"The gym and food are unbelievable," he said. "I was worried about what kind of workout facilities would be available to us, but I'm very impressed."

When asked of how he would describe the area to his loved ones back home, Thibodeaux reflected on one of his favorite television shows.

"This is our own version of M.A.S.H.," he said, "... with the tents, the choppers, and the mud. I almost feel like a cast member."

Tigers Arrive, Prepare to Take on Baghdad Missions

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux
256th BCT Public Affairs

TIGERLAND, Iraq-- The successful movement from Camp Buehring, Kuwait to a sprawling forward operating base in Baghdad was a historic moment for the Soldiers of the 256th "Tiger" Brigade Combat Team.

It was the first combat mission for the Tiger Brigade in its long and accomplished history. The 256th was mobilized for Desert Storm, but never deployed due to the short duration of the ground conflict.

Now, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III, the treacherous convoy marked the end of six months of training

and preparations and the beginning of daily combat operations.

"It was a significant accomplishment to arrive safely into Baghdad," said Brig. Gen. John Basilica, Jr., the brigade's commanding general. "Others before us have not been so fortunate."

The convoy into Baghdad took four days and three nights.

Currently the Soldiers are becoming acclimated to their surroundings and settling into what will be their homes and offices for the next year. They are working long hours down-loading equipment and setting up operations for the lengthy stay.

In addition to security

patrols, humanitarian relief efforts, and restoration of essential services, the Tigers will help train the Iraqi Security Forces to include the Iraqi National Guard and the local police. The American Soldiers will also provide security for the voter registration process in Baghdad and the upcoming elections.

Basilica noted that the 256th has excelled in training and faced many obstacles. He said the next year will be filled with challenges and that his Soldiers will rely on their training to get them through it. But for now, he's happy to be here.

"We are proud to be a part of the 1st Cavalry [Division] Team," he said.



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

A Tiger Brigade Soldier helps himself to some free popcorn at the Morale Welfare and Recreation Center at Camp Al-Tahreer (Liberty) in Baghdad, Iraq. The 256th Tiger Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in La., recently joined the 1st Cavalry Division and will serve alongside the division's other brigade combat teams to conduct security and civil military operations in their area of operations.

Chef-Turned-Soldier at Home in Chow Hall

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL TAHREER (Liberty), Iraq-- Between the crowds of people wolfing down chow and the din of conversation, every meal must seem like a banquet at the chow halls around Baghdad and they may as well be. But one Soldier knows the difference between hungry Soldiers satisfying their stomachs and a genuine banquet.

Before Spc. Ben Woolard became an Army cook, or "food service specialist," with the 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment out of Ft. Riley, Kan., he was a chef-in-training running the banquet hall at the Seelbach Hilton Hotel in Louisville, Ky.

"I was a banquet chef there, which basically involved supervising the cooking for big parties," the 23-year-old said. "I also got to make big ice sculptures and display them on the buffets."

While working at the hotel, Woolard was also attending Sullivan University, ranked third in the nation for culinary arts studies, where he earned his associate's degree after attending class for 18 months.

"I just love to cook, you're so free to be creative with it," he said, commenting on his choice of study, "but I didn't really know where it was going to take me."

Indeed, Woolard probably never guessed that after working two years as an executive chef at "The Lombardio Café," an Italian restaurant, that he would be enlisting in the Army to serve his country.

"I enlisted Jan. 21, 2003," the West



By Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

Spc. Ben Woolard, a food services specialist with the 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment, attached to the 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, checks the temperature on a refrigerator at the De Fleur dining facility on Camp Liberty in Baghdad. Before enlisting as an Army cook, Woolard was a professionally trained chef.

Frankfort, Ill. native said. "I chose to be a food service specialist in the Army because I love the job and I knew it was something I could do."

After going through basic training at Ft. Knox, Ky., Woolard attended his job's eight-and-a-half-week advanced individual training (AIT).

"The Army covers sanitation, the basics

of cooking, working in small garrison and large garrison chow halls, and then field cooking, which involved working with MKTs (Mobile Kitchen Trailers)," Woolard said.

Going from the "free to be creative" job of a professional chef to that of an Army "chow" cook was at first a shock for Woolard.

"It was a pretty big change for me," he said. "It was going from overseeing every-

thing in a kitchen to being just another worker.

"And the atmosphere is, of course, totally different," he added. "There isn't much room for creativity in an Army chow hall because you go by set recipes."

After graduating AIT, Woolard was stationed at Ft. Riley with 1-41 Infantry until they were deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II with the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mtn. Div. in June 2004.

"So far this deployment isn't that bad," he said. "It definitely could be worse. I mean, I've got three hot meals and a bed to sleep in. I can't complain."

Although he's a trained cook, Woolard was doing some very un-cook-like related tasks shortly after he arrived in Iraq.

"I spent five weeks manning a [traffic control-point] in eastern Baghdad and a week patrolling [Baghdad's slum] Sadr City," he said.

It wasn't long, however, before he was back working at a place more familiar to him. Because the cooks are all contracted civilian employees at the De Fleur dining facility, Woolard can't put to hands-on use his culinary education.

"At the chow hall, I oversee the cooking and preparation of food; I ensure sanitation in the kitchen; and check temperatures on the food stocks," he said.

Despite the presence of civilian cooks, Woolard doesn't discount the off chance that his Army training may be put to use out here.

"I haven't had to use my field cooking skills ... yet," he said with a laugh.

Fallujah Experience Helps Comrades Find Peace

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq-- It's a cool morning in the streets of Fallujah. A once lively city lays barren. An avenue that housed pedestrians and traffic shows no movement, except for a few alley cats.

A squad of Bradley Fighting Vehicles lines the outside of an abandoned home. It bears little damage relative to adjacent houses.

Inside the dilapidated building rest the battle-hardened Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. While some play cards or try to tune into a radio station, others rest after a week of intense battle.

One Soldier, reflects on an experience he knows he will never forget.

Pfc. Jose Becerra drives a Bradley and chauffeured a squad of his comrades through the streets of this ghost town before it was one.

"My platoon sergeant told me when this first started that we are going to experience some different



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

Pfc. Alvarez (front) and Pfc. Jose Becerra of Apache Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment relax in a Fallujah home temporarily used by the Company.

feelings," he said. "He was right. You get depressed and angry. It was like that in Najaf and here too."

In August, his unit helped clear Najaf, Iraq, of the insurgents that had claimed it for their own. But Najaf couldn't prepare them for what they would see three months later in Fallujah.

"We showed up and we were surprised," he said. "There was no way Najaf could prepare us for

what we saw. You're getting attacked from every which way, and these insurgents here knew what they were doing."

Becerra's company, Apache Company, was highly trained, battle-ready and they fought well. They did, however, lose one of their friends. The company took it hard, he said.

"My friend is always telling us 'Smile now, cry later.' Meaning we've got to do what we've got to do

now; we can cry later," he said. "We have to continue the mission. We can't stop and grieve when we lose someone. We have to keep going. We will have our time to cry."

It was that attitude that kept the rest of the company alive, he said. And the experiences they had together not only made them better warriors, it also made the guys grow to trust each other.

"In the infantry, we are family. We live together; fight

together," Becerra said. "That guy sitting next to you in the Bradley, he's not just your buddy, he's your brother. It's not just like high school where your friends will back you in a fight or something. In battle you learn who your true friends are."

Becerra, a 23-year-old Mercedes, Texas native said his time in Iraq has built bonds that he never knew possible.

"When you're back at Fort Hood, you see a lot of these guys and just think oh, he's just a guy in my platoon," he said as he pointed to a troop across the hall. "When you get here and you fight along side them, you know that you both want to make it home alive...you're brothers with that stranger now."

Even though Becerra's enlistment date in the Army has passed, he doesn't regret being in Iraq.

"Three days ago I was supposed to be out of the Army," he said. "I don't mind though. I'm where I need to be. I need to watch out for my brothers and make sure they make it home safe."

In Recognition

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Purple Hearts Awarded for Wounds in Battle of Najaf

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns
39th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- Members of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and elements of the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry, were recently honored during a Purple Heart Ceremony at Camp Taji, Iraq. The Soldiers were presented Purple Heart awards by the 1st Cavalry Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Pete Chiarelli, for wounds received in the battle of Najaf, with the Marine Corps last August.

The Battalion helped Marines from the 4th Infantry Division and Iraqi Security Forces take back control of the holy city from Muqtada Al Sadr's militia, who were using it as stronghold for anti-Iraq activity. The battle was seen as the first strategic victory for the Iraqi Government.

In a speech to the troops, Chiarelli said, "It is true this battalion went to Najaf and made Marine Corps history. In a way I think the Marine Corps thinks this battalion belongs to them. The work you did in Najaf was amazing and I know you are ready to go do it again."

The award comes on the eve of a new

assault on the city of Fallujah, which is seen as a bastion for insurgents in Iraq. For weeks, the military has launched precision air strikes in an attempt to destroy the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his inner circle. The strikes were performed in hopes of avoiding an assault of the city, which lies 40 miles northwest of Baghdad.

Soldiers of the 2-7 Cav. and elements of 2-162 Inf. recently participated with a Marine assault on the city after no peace agreements were reached by officials. Interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi made the final decision for an offensive attack when talks failed.

Chiarelli decorated 19 Soldiers in all. Some of the Soldiers, such as Sgt. Joseph Howell of Oregon, were second time recipients of the award since their arrival in Iraq.

The Purple Heart award is the oldest award given in the military and dates back to 1782 when General George Washington established it for gallant actions.

"Only three were given in the entire revolutionary war," Chiarelli said.

With it's gold plating, the award is said to cost more to make than any other award in the military, including the Medal of Honor, the Army's highest medal of achievement.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns, 39th BCT Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Scott Smith (above), 26, of the 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry Regiment, is awarded the Purple Heart by Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the 1st Cavalry Division Commander, for wounds received in Najaf.

Nineteen Soldiers from 2-7 Cavalry and 2-162 Infantry were decorated with purple hearts for wounds received in the battle of Najaf last August. The battle was seen as the first strategic victory for the Iraqi government. The Purple Heart is the oldest award in the military's array of medals, with the first one presented in 1782.



Our Fallen Troops

Pvt. Justin Yoemans

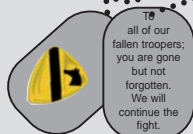
Spc. Raymond White

Spc. Brian Baker

Spc. Bryan Freeman

Spc. Travis Babbit

Spc. Jose Velez



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

As troops of the 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, bear their unit colors, fellow Soldiers honor a hero: Pvt. Justin Yoemans, who was killed by a car bomb while patrolling in Baghdad, Nov. 6. The memorial ceremony took place outside battalion headquarters on Camp Al-Tahreer (Liberty) Nov 12.

4-5 ADA Ceremony Held to Honor Fallen Comrade

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- A grand formation of companies from the 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, stood at attention, Nov. 12. Troops bearing unit guidons encircled a single M-16 rifle displaying a portrait of a fallen comrade.

The Purple Heart and Bronze Star that lay next to his rifle told this story. Pvt. Justin Yoemans was killed when a car bomb detonated while his team was patrolling its sector in Baghdad, Nov. 6.

The young Soldier was born April 30, 1984, and raised in Eufaula, Ala. He joined the Army in January of 2004 in hopes to serve his country in Iraq. He became a part of 4-5 ADA in August, and his short stay with the battalion will ring on.

"Justin was special from the fact that he had the ability to make everyone around him laugh," said Capt. Curran Chidester, Battery A commander. "He was also a true Soldier, a very hard worker and never complained about anything. No matter what he was asked to do, he did it without hesitation."

Yoemans' strong ethic and yearning to be alongside his fellow Soldiers was found even more so by Chidester after speaking with Justin's father.

"When I talked to his father, I told him about when Justin was in

my office explaining to me how he thought he broke his toe coming out of his Bradley," Chidester said. "His father also told me how he knew about how his son had broken his toe a few days prior to that, and that he was hiding it from his chain of command out of fear that he would not be able to go out with his patrol team for a while."

The 4-5 ADA Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Mitchell Morrow spoke of what kind of person Yoemans was.

"It was obvious in Pvt. Yoemans' letters to his mother that he was proud to be in the First Cavalry Division, and task force 4-5. He had written letters home talking finely and proudly about his friends and fellow Soldiers who were part of his patrol," he said during the memorial. "I tell you this because it helps frame the kind of man, and the kind of Soldier we are saying goodbye to today. Justin cared about his family. He cared about his unit. He cared about the people of Iraq, because he was that kind of Soldier; he was that kind of man."

"Justin, you will be truly missed," Chidester concluded. "I feel honored to have had you amongst our ranks, and I take comfort knowing you are in a better place. Part of a greater army: God's army. And I know that as an assault Soldier you will stand at the front of the ranks."

Thriller 'Saw' a Mixed Bag, but Mostly Good

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

LeDrew's Reviews

SPC Erik
LeDrew



Movie Critic

The new serial-killer thriller "Saw" is a high-concept flick that stands out in a tired genre, but it is sadly more gimmick and polish than actual substance.

The film's set-up finds two strangers waking up in a dingy, poorly-lit bathroom, neither of whom remember how they got there or even where they are. These two strangers, a Dr. Lawrence Gordan, played by Cary Elwes, and a photographer named Adam, played by the film's screenwriter Leigh Wannell, are both chained to walls on the opposite side of the room, which also has a third occupant square in the middle of the room; a man who apparently committed suicide, clutching a revolver in one hand and a tape player in the other.

The two strangers quickly realize that they are the latest victims of a serial-killer called the "Jigsaw Killer," a sadistic mastermind who places his victims in situations that force them to confront their hidden secrets and ultimately make a choice between dying and living...but not without gruesome results (i.e.- a hacksaw comes into play at one point. Think about it...)

This is all revealed in the first few minutes of "Saw," and really only scratches the surface of the machinations working underneath the surface of the film's engaging plot.

As the movie races on through its hour and a half running time, it begins to jump back and forth in time, going between the main plot of the two protagonists trapped in the room attempting to thwart an inevitable fate, and a subplot about an obsessed former detective (played by Danny Glover) who used to be on the Jigsaw Killer case but bungled up the foe's arrest, losing the life of his partner in the process.

For being made on a (relatively) miniscule budget of \$1 million, the movie looks pretty fantastic. From the grisly make-up to the washed-out, grimy cinematography a la "Seven" (not a bad flick to be compared with), first-time feature

director James Wan and his craftsmen get far more bang for their few bucks than many of the massively-budgeted but mediocre thrillers that Hollywood seems perfectly content to churn out time and again.

To wit, "Saw" was made on 1/60th the budget of "The Ring," and yet its visual look is just as impressive.

There are times however, when director Wan tries too hard to ape the David Fincher (director of "Seven" and "Fight Club") style of filmmaking, pushing his camera tricks from the "slick" territory into the "overkill" or "that-just-took-me-right-out-of-the-movie" territory.

Would "Saw" have ascended to classic-of-the-genre status if the filmmakers hadn't been so tempted to imbue the gut-wrenching goings on with MTV-esque editing tricks?

Possibly. Hell, it still might due to its excellent box office returns, making back 1700% of its budget over Halloween weekend alone (to date it has grossed over \$50 million in the U.S., a remarkable sum for an independently-produced flick without any major actors).

"Saw" also manages to have a fantastic final moment which while a bit incredulous, is nevertheless



Yahoo Movies

The clock is ticking for Cary Elwes' character.

one of those "Wow, I didn't see that one coming" moments that manages to wash away the slightly bitter aftertaste left by the movie's weakest element: it's acting.

Screenwriter Leigh Wannell ("Adam") has never acted before and this is obvious. During moments that require subtlety and restraint, his acting is so over-the-top that it threatens to bring a serious movie into the realm of cominess and camp.

His cohort, Cary Elwes, fares a bit better but the guy still strug-

gles through some of the film's more gut-wrenching scenes.

It's quite possible that fault for these acting flubs should rest with director Wan, but either way, Elwes isn't at the top of his game as he was in his "Princess Bride" and "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" days.

As far as Danny Glover goes, his part is practically a cameo, but he does it well and his gravitas is a welcome presence in the film.

Flaws aside, "Saw" is an intense little horror flick well worth a watch.

'Second City': Skits and Sketches get Ironhorse Troops Rolling during Eastern Baghdad Tour

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- Chicago-based comedy group The Second City visited 1st Brigade Combat Team Iron Horse Soldiers on Nov. 7 as a part of a USO tour of Iraq and Kuwait.

The show, composed of skits and improvised sketches, included singing and charades. While some of the gags were scripted, the group got the crowd to participate by asking for a setting, situation, or object for each sketch.

Laughter filled the Iron Horse theater, and the Soldiers said it was a nice break for them.

"That was the funniest thing I've seen in a long time," said Pfc. Robert Parsons, 20, a combat engineer in Company C, 20th Engineer Battalion. "They're really talented. They seemed motivated to be here."

After the show, the sextet moved to the Iron Horse Recreation Center to sign autographs.

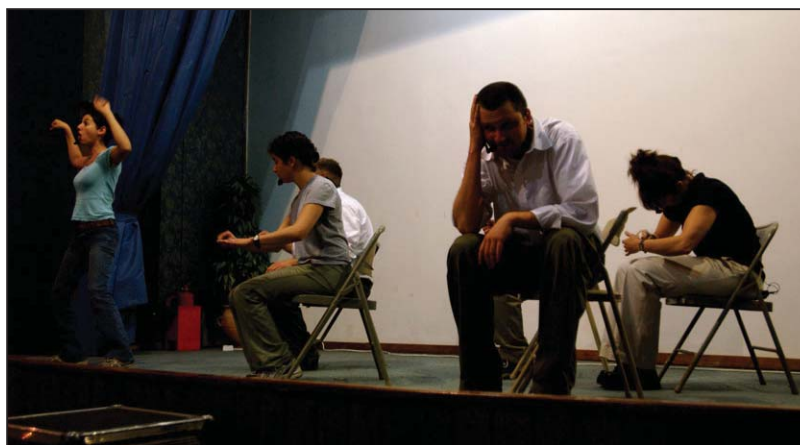
"Anything to take [Soldiers' minds] off things is great," said Craig Uhler, one of the performers. "Laughter is our mission."

"I thought this was a great audience," said performer Andy St. Clair.

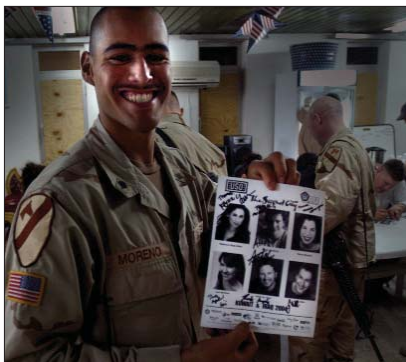
The group reached back into The Second City's 45-year history for skits that homesick Soldiers might enjoy. The inevitable result was a whole lot of laughter.

"[The Soldiers] always had good suggestions [and] had a lot of energy," said performer Alex Fendrich.

"I'm proud to be able to perform anything for our troops," St. Clair said. "Anything I can do for [the troops] for all the things they're doing for us... although I'm really not doing much compared to what they're doing for America."



Photos by Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD



Rebecca Sage Allen (above left), acts out a skit with other members of a comedy group The Second City during a performance for Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team on Nov. 7. Spc. Angelo Moreno (left), 20, of Company C, 20th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, shows off his freshly autographed poster of the 45-year-old comedy group Second City following a performance at 1BCT. Second City is a Chicago-based group bringing entertainment to troops stationed in Iraq and Kuwait as part of a theater-wide USO tour.